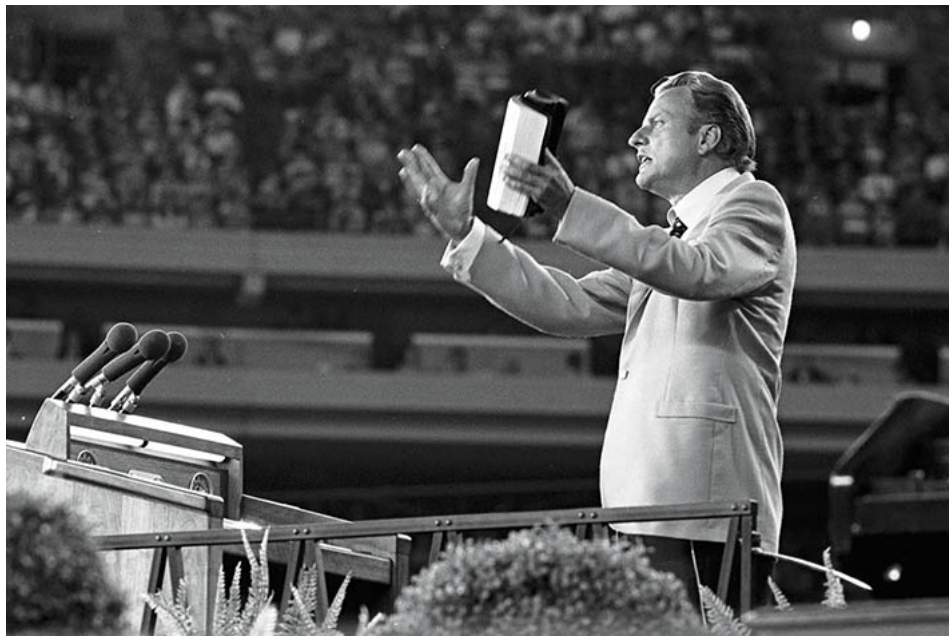


A Classic Billy Graham Message: In the World, But Not of It

By **Billy Graham** (<https://billygraham.org/author/billy-graham/>) • January 28, 2016 • Topics: [Evangelism](https://billygraham.org/grow-your-faith/topics/christian-living/evangelism/) (<https://billygraham.org/grow-your-faith/topics/christian-living/evangelism/>).

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At a meeting of church leaders in Seattle, Washington, one member of the group reportedly said that if the church is to make its greatest impact on our generation, it must become more worldly minded. While in one sense that may bear some truth, in the biblical sense it is false.

As we read the New Testament, it is clear that we are not to become entangled with the world. Now at first glance, a new Christian might shrink from this idea. But the question I want to ask today is, “What is the world?” There are at least three meanings attached to the word *world*.

First, the Bible says that there is the created world. “God ... made the world and everything in it” (Acts 17:24).

Second, there are the inhabitants of the world, whom God loves and for whom Christ died. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” (John 3:16).

Third, there is the cosmos, the world system, which is headed by Satan and based upon self, greed and pride. This is the world that God warns about, and it is this world system and philosophy that Christians are to shun and remain free from.

Clear Signals

The warnings are clear. The Bible says in Romans 12:2, “Do not be conformed to this world.” The Bible teaches in Galatians 1:4 that, “[Christ] gave Himself for our sins (http://peacewithgod.net/?utm_source=BGMainsite&utm_medium=PWG+Link&utm_campaign=PWG+Internal&utm_content=A+Classic+Billy+

Graham+Message+In+the+World+But+Not+of+It+012816&outreach=BG+In+world+but+not+of+it), that He might deliver us from this present evil age [cosmos].” In other words, the world was such a great danger to our souls that this danger caused Christ, the Son of God, to go to the cross to deliver us from it.

Throughout the Bible, the lines are definitely drawn between the world of unbelievers and the world of the children of God. “Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4). Jesus Himself said, “The world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world” (John 17:14-16). Again Jesus said, “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you” (John 15:18).

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The Bible also teaches that the Christian will face

opposition in the world. “All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution,” said the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3:12. Just as Christ’s life with all its love, concern and selflessness was a rebuke to the cosmos of His time, so our lives with Christ abiding in us today bring about criticism, opposition and persecution from those who cannot comprehend the mystery of God’s redemptive grace.

The Bible teaches that we are not to be discouraged by this belligerence. We are to consider it evidence that we are identified with Christ. Jesus said, “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven” (Matthew 5:11-12).

Don’t Be Deceived

In this complex generation in which we live, it is not easy for the Christian to distinguish between that which is spiritual and that which is worldly. In the Bible, Satan is called an “angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14). He is a great imitator, and it is not always easy to distinguish between Satan’s world and the realm where God reigns. Jesus said that if it were possible, Satan would deceive even the elect (see Matthew 24:24).

This cosmos has its own entertainment and diversions that so permeate the atmosphere that it makes the way of the cross seem antiquated and irrelevant. In much of the entertainment media fostered by the cosmos, the name of God is profaned, sex is glamorized, and high, ethical living and Christian moral standards are laughed at.

Even many Christians are tricked into believing that they cannot enjoy life except as a member of the cosmos crowd. However, the happiest people I know are separated followers of Jesus Christ. They are not dependent upon artificial stimulants. They do not have to abuse their bodies to relax their minds. The Bible says, “In Your presence is fullness of joy” (Psalm 16:11).

Christianity is not a long list of restrictions. It flings open the windows to the real joy of living. The cosmos would have us believe that following Christ is nothing but “thou shalt nots.” The cosmos would have us believe that Christianity is a killjoy, a stolid kind of life, unnatural and abnormal.

But the evidence in the Bible is to the contrary. Christ said, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). And those who have been truly converted to Jesus Christ (http://peacewithgod.net/?utm_source=BGMainSite&utm_medium=PWG+Link&utm_campaign=PWG+Internal&utm_content=A+Classic+Billy+Graham+Message+In+the+World+But+Not+of+It+012816&outreach=BG+In+world+but+not+of+it) know the meaning of abundant living.

The Bible teaches that worldliness is a force, a spirit, an atmosphere of the cosmos that is in opposition to all that is godly and Christian. Its goal is selfish pleasure, material success and the pride of life. It is ambitious, self-centered. God is not necessarily denied; He is just ignored and forgotten.

No Neutral Ground

The Bible is clear that the world's inhabitants are either under the influence of this cosmos with its cunning, deception and spell; or they are in Christ and under the direction of the Spirit of God. There is no neutral ground. The lines are drawn by the Bible.

Paul wrote to the Ephesians, about the sins "in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience ... Even when we were dead in trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ" (Ephesians 2:2, 5).

The words *course of this world* carry the meaning of current or flow. There is an undertow, a subtle current that runs against and in contradiction to the will and the way of God. Its eddies are deep and treacherous. They are stirred and troubled by Satan and intended to trap and ensnare those who would walk godly in Christ Jesus.

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Satan employs every device at his command to harass, tempt, thwart and hurt the people of God. His attack is relentless. Paul wrote, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12).

However, the Christian is not left defenseless in this conflict. God provides the power to give us victory over Satan. Paul said, "We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37).

How Do We Win?

We can overcome the onslaught of Satan and the power of this world system of evil by the blood of the Lamb. We will never overcome by mere human effort. We will never overcome by our deeds of righteousness, however commendable they may be. We will never overcome by mere social concern or by identifying ourselves with various social revolutions. The Bible says, "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony" (Revelation 12:11).

We are involved in a spiritual conflict. This is a battle between the forces of God and the forces of Satan, and we are involved in it. We are asked to choose sides.

The Bible warns us about being taken in by the evil of this cosmos. Satan's lies are cleverly mixed with truth. When he tempted Christ, he was convincingly logical and even quoted Scripture. So the Bible instructs Christians to make a clean break with all the evils of the world and that we be separated from them. The Apostle Paul said, "Therefore 'come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you'" (2 Corinthians 6:17).

Jesus ate with publicans and sinners (Mark 2:16). Nearly everyone He associated with was an outcast. But His relationship with them was not purely social; it was redemptive.

Christians are like the gulf stream, which is in the ocean and yet not part of it. This mysterious current defies the mighty Atlantic, ignores its tides, and flows steadily upon its course. Its color is different, being a deeper blue. Its temperature is different, being warmer. Its direction is different, being from south to north. It is in the ocean, and yet it is not part of it.

So we as Christians are in the world. We come in contact with the world, and yet we retain our distinctive kingdom character and refuse to let the world press us into its mold.

The world is keenly aware of its emptiness, of its unfulfilled dreams, of its failure to cope with life. The world system is inadequate to meet the deeper needs of the human heart. This is ideal soil for implanting the Gospel. God has seen fit to entrust the work of His kingdom to us. If the world system is changed, it will be through our witness.

God Loves You

The primary responsibility of the Christian is to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel (http://peacewithgod.net/?utm_source=BGMainsite&utm_medium=PWG+Link&utm_campaign=PWG+Internal&utm_content=A+Classic+Billy+Graham+Message+In+the+World+But+Not+of+It+012816&outreach=BG+In+world+but+not+of+it)—that God loves the world, has redeemed it through the cross of our Savior, and seeks to save it.

Then, after men and women have come to Christ, they go back into the world to live for Christ as a witness to the world; they become salt and light (Matthew 5:13-14), and they have their sociological, political influence upon the world.

We are not to hold the world in contempt. We are to obey its laws. We are to love those for whom Christ died. We are to pray for them, witness to them, and help in all worthwhile social projects that we can. But we are to achieve that most difficult of all tasks, not to be conformed to the world. This is the Christian's stand; this is the Christian's job. ©1968 (revised 1998) BGEA

Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, New King James Version.

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Sheila says:

February 19, 2018 at 7:46 am (<https://billygraham.org/decision-magazine/february-2016/a-classic-billy-graham-message-in-the-world-but-not-of-it/comment-page-3/#comment-1650920>)

Amen!

Reply (<https://billygraham.org/decision-magazine/february-2016/a-classic-billy-graham-message-in-the-world-but-not-of-it/?replytocom=1648954#respond>)

demkholam kipgen says:

February 13, 2018 at 2:13 pm (<https://billygraham.org/decision-magazine/february-2016/a-classic-billy-graham-message-in-the-world-but-not-of-it/comment-page-3/#comment-1648954>)

Yes, we can only change the world by not conforming to it. Amen.

Reply (<https://billygraham.org/decision-magazine/february-2016/a-classic-billy-graham-message-in-the-world-but-not-of-it/?replytocom=1647909#respond>)

Rev. Samson Peters says:

February 6, 2018 at 4:05 am (<https://billygraham.org/decision-magazine/february-2016/a-classic-billy-graham-message-in-the-world-but-not-of-it/comment-page-3/#comment-1647909>)

I praise God for enabling me to be back in relation with Dr. Billy Graham's spiritual messages.

Reply (<https://billygraham.org/decision-magazine/february-2016/a-classic-billy-graham-message-in-the-world-but-not-of-it/?replytocom=1647907#respond>)

Rev. Samson Peters says:

February 6, 2018 at 4:00 am (<https://billygraham.org/decision-magazine/february-2016/a-classic-billy-graham-message-in-the-world-but-not-of-it/comment-page-3/#comment-1647907>)

I need to continue my relationship, which was lost.

Scott Riles says:

March 8, 2018 at 8:08 pm (<https://billygraham.org/decision-magazine/february-2016/a-classic-billy-graham-message-in-the-world-but-not-of-it/comment-page-3/#comment-1668109>).

Thank God for bringing you back in! I was so happy when I heard this.

Mike Pearson says:
Reply (<https://billygraham.org/decision-magazine/february-2016/a-classic-billy-graham-message-in-the-world-but-not-of-it/?replytocom=1601220#respond>).

August 16, 2017 at 6:51 am (<https://billygraham.org/decision-magazine/february-2016/a-classic-billy-graham-message-in-the-world-but-not-of-it/comment-page-3/#comment-1601220>).

Thank You Precious Lord Jesus Abba Father!!! Thank You for Your Powerful shepherding, love, grace, and sacrifice on the cross!!

Thank You for calling and guiding me (and twin brother) to be winsome servant soldiers of Yours!!! Thank You for allowing us to know and serve You alone!!!

Help us to continually follow You and to help make disciples of Your Gospel within the strength & conditioning and athletic world?! All the Praise, Power, and Glory are Yours alone!!!

Thank You Lord Jesus!!!

Hallelujah!!!

We love You!!!

Pat & Mike Pearson

Frank says:
Reply (<https://billygraham.org/decision-magazine/february-2016/a-classic-billy-graham-message-in-the-world-but-not-of-it/?replytocom=1601184#respond>).

August 16, 2017 at 1:10 am (<https://billygraham.org/decision-magazine/february-2016/a-classic-billy-graham-message-in-the-world-but-not-of-it/comment-page-3/#comment-1601184>).

Encouraging message. I'm blessed and have received grace to not conform to the patterns of the world.

Hallelujah to Jesus. Thank you BGEA.

← Older Comments (<https://billygraham.org/decision-magazine/february-2016/a-classic-billy-graham-message-in-the-world-but-not-of-it/comment-page-2/#comments>).

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